



Paris: After the Liberation 1944-1949

Antony Beevor, Artemis Cooper

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"A rich and intriguing story which the authors disentangle with great skill."--*Sunday Telegraph*

Beevor's *Ardennes 1944: The Battle of the Bulge* is now available from Viking Books

In this brilliant synthesis of social, political, and cultural history, Antony Beevor and Artemis Cooper present a vivid and compelling portrayal of the City of Lights after its liberation. Paris became the diplomatic battleground in the opening stages of the Cold War. Against this volatile political backdrop, every aspect of life is portrayed: scores were settled in a rough and uneven justice, black marketers grew rich on the misery of the population, and a growing number of intellectual luminaries and artists including Hemingway, Beckett, Camus, Sartre, de Beauvoir, Cocteau, and Picasso contributed new ideas and a renewed vitality to this extraordinary moment in time.

Paris: After the Liberation 1944-1949 Details

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From Reader Review Paris: After the Liberation 1944-1949 for online ebook

Geoff says

I cannot stress how important this book is in understanding the zeitgeist of Paris, France, and Europe after the war. A must read for anyone who wants a stronger understanding on how the trends and wants of our generation are the way they are.

Xfi says

Escrito en la línea de “Berlín, La Caída”, en esta obra Beevor nos cuenta los últimos días de Paris bajo el dominio nazis así como los meses posteriores al final de la guerra.

Tiene el mérito de desmitificar los hechos, tanto la importancia de la resistencia francesa como de la euforia posterior a la liberación, que pronto fue engullida por el hambre y el frío provocado por la catastrófica situación de Francia en la inmediata post-guerra.

También los golpes bajos y el clima casi de guerra civil que se creó entre el influyente Partido Comunista y el nuevo poder Americano, con el egocéntrico General De Gaulle en medio. No se puede descartar como teoría que lo que ocurrió en la Francia de finales de los 40 fue un verdadero golpe de estado, dado eso sí con a “mejor de las intenciones”, es decir un triunfo del Partido Comunista en las urnas que pusiera a Francia en la órbita soviética..

El libro, aunque bien documentado se pierde en muchas ocasiones en detalles intrascendentes y sobre todo en el enaltecimiento de la “intelectualidad”, con demasiadas referencias a lo que dijeron o hicieron personajes influyentes de la época.

Buen libro para el que le interese el tema. No por nada Antony Beevor es uno de los más famosos historiadores de la 2º Guerra Mundial, pero para el no iniciado puede ser un libro muy espeso, algo inferior a otros del mismo autor.

Ruth says

There are so many good books on this subject that I would not bother with this one. I don't understand even the approach to the subject matter. Chapter 1 is about Petain and De Gaulle; 2 is The Paths of Collaboration and resistance. And so on. There is little if any carry over from one chapter to another. It's as if they had no mannequin to tack their story on to. Or that they just randomly started up new chapters when they had something they wanted to get into. I expected them to concentrate on life as lived in Paris after the war, and expound on other things from there. For me, there is just too much info and too little cohesion.

Edward says

Seventy years after Paris was liberated and the subsequent end of World War II, it's easy to forget the bitter divisions that existed in France. France's surrender at the beginning of the war led to the Vichy government

under Petain which collaborated with the German occupiers, but there was a burgeoning resistance movement which was itself divided into factions. On one side were the communists, strong in France from before the war, and on the other, the government-in-exile led by Charles de Gaulle, absolutely opposed to the Communists who nearly won a plurality of the vote in 1946. Within these groups were more factions.

At the end of the war, there were recriminations and executions for "traitors". After that came attempts to set up a stable government which would try, ineffectively, to combat desperate fuel (two unusually cold winters in a row) and food shortages with resulting strikes and chaotic conditions.

At the bottom of most of this turmoil could be found DeGaulle who many suspected of wanting to establish a dictatorship to lead France out of its troubles. DeGaulle had little patience for the intricacies of parliamentary government, and he reflected France's divisions. During the war the Americans and British had found him very difficult to work so he was always somewhat isolated. He was furious about post-war efforts to strengthen Germany, wanting instead a permanently divided Germany with France confiscating its industrial heartland in the Ruhr. He distrusted Britain and even more distrusted the Americans. He opposed the Marshall Plan of aid to Europe as an American plot to economically subjugate France. He saw enemies on all sides, including Russia, a contradiction as a weakened Germany would not act as a counterweight to the Soviet Union, a strategy that the Americans and British pursued as the Cold War began to develop.

All of this, of course, only deals with the political struggles of the time. The book also discusses the profound changes that would come to France in the late 40's. Contributing to these changes were the music of the Americans, the GI's who had money to spend in impoverished Paris, the tourists who began to flood Europe, the army of bureaucrats who swept over France. And there were the intellectual disputes of the time between such men as Sartre and Camus.

All together it was a incredibly complicated period, and despite DeGaulle's opposition, what really allowed France to economically rebuild itself, including its war-damaged infrastructure was the help provided by the Marshall Plan. Without it, France would not be what it is today.

Don Janssen says

"De la Résistance à la Révolution" read the caption of 'Combat', the French underground newspaper that began to appear during the second World War. This 'slogan' has a slightly romantic undertone, just as the title of this book, "Paris after the Liberation" evokes some romantic images (if only for the photograph on the cover, Robert Doisneau's famous "La dernière valse du 14 juillet", representing a lonely dancing couple in night Paris).

However, this book describes a rather down-to-earth reality, the reality of an impoverished Paris, where during the harsh winters of 1944-47, people didn't have any heating in their homes: "Pipes froze, burst, poured forth, and refroze in huge icicles". Transportation had almost come to a standstill, while there was a shortage of almost everything. The economy had stopped functioning normally, people exchanged goods and services rather than receiving payment in cash. The 'black market' flourished.

The book is also about politics, even very much so.

When the French envisaged during the war their national future, there were apprehensions of what might happen after a liberation. Suppose the Communists were about to get the upper hand; that might incite the Americans to impose a military regime in order to forestall a communist regime. Others feared however that

if général de Gaulle were to impose himself at the head of government, this might lead very well to a kind of dictatorship. De Gaulle indeed intended to assume power; he wanted the French resistance to be united, it should be seen as a unity acting under his leadership, and this would be the foundation for his future power base after the war. But his 'slogan' would rather be "De la Résistance à la Restauration" (implying a return to the period before the Third Republic, which he loathed because of its 'parliamentarianism'). Some 'royalists' even dreamed of the Comte de Paris usurping the throne, reinstating a monarchy in France.

The book tells the complicated situation that arose after the war. De Gaulle had indeed assumed power, but opposition rose quickly in the form of strikes, mostly organized by Communists. The authors are remarkably critical of de Gaulle's politics: his attitude was anti-Anglo-Saxon, which made him conclude a treaty with the USSR, but he was anti-communist at the same time. This made him look at himself as a possible bridge-builder between the two poles; France could then take up again her role as an independent great power. When he resigned in January '46, de Gaulle expected to be called back soon. André Malraux, who claimed to be close with the general, even expected him to come back shortly as a dictator. (Malraux who, by the way, had had the lucidity to refuse engaging in resistance activities as long as the Americans didn't take part in the war.) But de Gaulle wasn't called back, even though the economic problems continued. The penury in France was relieved only when the Marshall-help began in '49. According to the authors, this was the decisive factor that finally broke down the power of the french Communists.

So, on the political level, the book is informative. But the reading isn't always thrilling. It abounds with anecdotes, but was it really necessary to let us know that at the day of the inauguration of Président Vincent Auriol "the women wore formal dresses, but the men were in dinner jackets rather than tail coats" (p.255)? Was it indispensable to detail the menu and wine list of the lunch Auriol offered to his American guests at the Elysée (p.359)? The authors seem to delight in such details. Or else they were so proud of have having dug these up, that they couldn't refrain from telling them, - one of the authors being the granddaughter of the English ambassador at the time, which enabled them to use his unpublished diaries as one of their sources.

Margit says

I'm re-reading this. It's from a few years back when Beevor wasn't quite as commercially aware as he is now. Excellent, and full of the most spectacularly interesting information!

Janos says

An utterly interesting and compelling book. Well-researched and highly illuminating, full of interesting facts as well as juicy titbits from the life and intrigues of contemporary French (and emigré) writers, thinkers and artists living in Paris, from Sartre and Beauvoir to Mauriac and Camus, from Picasso to Derain and from Arletty to Yves Montand, "collabos" (or suspects) and "résistants", aristocrats and Communists, everything and everybody else in-between, while also faithfully chronicling the political and social history of those fateful years. Also immensely readable. Indeed, it reads like a novel. I enjoyed it very much.

Zivan says

It's interesting to see how much power Communism held in the minds of people during and after WWII and how France too was in some danger of falling into the Soviet bear hug.

Paris being Paris it was also important to read about the cultural leaders of the time, though I wold have liked to see more of daily life instead of how drunk a an existentialist got at a party.

Joaquim Alvarado says

Beevor no només és especialista en batalles. En aquesta obra ens brinda les diferències internes de la política, la societat i la intel·lectualitat francesa després de l'alliberament de París. Excel·lent retrat dels tics totalitaris de De Gaulle, de les diferències de criteri entre els aliats i del paper distorsionador del sistema que van jugar els comunistes, així com del dia a dia dels intel·lectuals i artistes parisenques. De retruc, és una crítica a la idiosincràsia francesa, amb la "grandeur" sempre present i amb la seva obsessió (encara present avui en dia) de creure que França és una de les nacions que dirigeixen el món.

David Lowther says

It's ironic that a book that's partly about collaboration should itself be a terrific example of collaboration between the husband and wife team of Antony Beevor and Artemis Cooper. Who dealt with what aspects of life in Paris between 1944 and 1949 I neither know nor care.

The book covers, in gripping fashion, the revenge on the collaborators, the political turmoil, the cultural history of the period with writers like Sartre and painters like Picasso prominent, the re-birth of Paris fashion (Dior) and France's eventual recovery, thanks to Marshall Plan money.

Brilliantly researched with essential notes and an exhaustive bibliography, Paris: After the Liberation 1944-1949 is a very fine piece of modern historical writing indeed.

David Lowther. Author of The Blue Pencil, Liberating Belsen and Two Families at War, all published by Sacristy Press.

Rob Innis says

Having read many other of Beevor's books I was disappointed with this one and could not engage. Managed to extract some useful info but found myself scan reading, not one of his classics.

Czarny Pies says

"Paris apres la liberation 1944-1949" est un louange glorieux a la France, a son peuple et a la culture comme

seulement les anglais sont capables d'ecrire. Ce livre vient de la main d'Antony Beevor le grand historien des batailles sur le Front de l'est pendant la deuxième grande mondiale et de sa femme Artemis Cooper la petite fille de Duff Cooper qui a été ambassadeur anglais à Paris de 1944 à 1949.

Ce que l'on trouve dans "Paris après la libération" sont les souvenirs de la famille Cooper et leurs amis des événements qui ont eu lieu dans et autour de l'ambassade anglaise. La liste de personnages est remarquable: Jean Cocteau, Charles de Gaulle, Georges Vanier, Evelyn Waugh, Juliette Greco, Malcolm Muggeridge, Gaston Pawlewski et pas moins de trois futurs lauréats du prix Nobel de la Littérature à savoir François Mauriac, Winston Churchill et Ernest Hemingway.

Je dois mettre ce livre dans la catégorie de plaisir coupable. Il ne possède aucune thèse. Cependant, les descriptions des grands auteurs et les incidents auxquels ils participent sont extraordinaires. Le lecteur fait vite l'illusion qu'il est assis à une table dans un café cabaret sur la rive gauche avec Ernest Hemingway à sa gauche et Jean Cocteau à sa droite tandis que Juliette Greco chante sur la scène.

Ce livre plaît énormément. C'est une belle mémoire de l'époque ou la douceur de vie a fait son retour à Paris.

Kurripops says

I bought this book after reading 'Suite Française' and being intrigued by France under the Occupation. I have also read Beevor's Stalingrad and Berlin, both of which were absorbing.

This book has been very much in the 'can't put down' class. It would be easy to expect that the minutiae of post-war French politics would be both boring and confusing, but the writing style saves us. And by interspersing chapters on social matters such as fashion, theatre and lifestyles, the reader is drawn through the period with regular diversionary treats within the political story.

The narrative is enlivened by quotes from contemporary diaries, particularly of people who were in positions to observe the political and diplomatic manoeuvring.

All in all, the book maintains a lively pace and gives, I hope, an accurate depiction of that most interesting period in French history.

As a bonus, my copy of the Penguin edition was constructed so that the back didn't break, a fate that occurred with my Spanish Civil War copy!!

Mark Adkins says

I will start by saying I did not know much about the politics of France (and still don't know much), most of the reading I have done on France has been regarding the battles fought on French soil during the two world wars.

This book as the title suggests talks about what happened after the battles when the city of Paris was liberated and the effects that the liberation had on the people and city and France in general.

This book was interesting for the most part, there were sections that I lost interest in, mainly talking about various artists and how the war affected them and how they did post-war. This was not the fault of the writing, I just have little interest in that sort of stuff.

The one major complaint I have in this book is that the author would sometimes put french expressions or quotes down and not put the english translation, some off them I could figure out but the majority I could not. It did not really make that big a deal to the telling of a story but just was I found a major annoyance.

Ali says

“Paris After Liberation” is not just a book about a city, it is a gallant effort to draw the portrait of a society in transition from extreme conditions of a ruthless occupation and national confusion to the stability of normality and prosperity. Although historians talk much about the early years of 1940's and the war efforts, few have studied the later years of that most eventful decade, whose end witnessed the start of the cold war and a new chapter in global history.

“Paris After liberation” studies these years in Paris, the city of light. It pays a much admired attention to the details of social life as well as political atmosphere. Beevor includes politicians, artists, philosophers and writers as well as ordinary people in his story. By doing this he draws an accurate picture of events, their trends and transformation that individuals and society experienced alike.

One may say in doing this he sacrifices the depth and remains satisfied with the surface of the events. That is the purpose of this book to provide readers with a big picture of so many intriguing characters, history changing ideas and history making events, going deeper than that creates bias and unbalances the book's narrative. One who seeks to study further about any individual or any particular part of French contemporary history finds this book a good starting point. For anyone who wants to learn about France, this wonderful country that still continues to intrigue us and sometimes to annoy us, “Paris After Liberation” is a must.

Joel Simon says

This is my second Antony Beevor book (although this one was co-authored with Artemis Cooper) and I can say that I am a fan, although I think I enjoyed Stalingrad a bit more, due to its faster pace.

Paris After the Liberation gives a very interesting and detailed review of the struggle for the political soul of France between the Communist Party and just about everyone else. There are a lot of pages devoted to the literary, philosophical, art and music scene of the post-war period (Sartre, de Beauvoir, Camus, Picasso, Greco to name a few), which is fabulous, if you are interested in that. I particularly liked the interplay of all the political personalities and the details made available by Artemis Cooper's access to her father's (Duff Cooper) personal papers add a lot of intimacy to the stories.

If you are interested in the modern history of France, and especially if you are not French but are living in

France, I highly recommend this book to you.

Megan says

In some ways, reading this book feels like cramming for a test from my notes--occasionally names come up that I don't quite remember, and the order of events is often unclear to me. But in the end, I don't mind. Even subjects that I would normally skip over have been addressed in such a way, and with enough brevity, that I enjoy knowing about them, particularly because they are generously peppered with pithy excerpts from the letters and journals of key players. I feel I'm acquiring a good general knowledge of the era, with a breadth unusual in history books. Beevor and Cooper set out to be comprehensive, and I think they do quite a good job.

Plus, a bonus--the other night I had dinner with a friend and her father, a former diplomat from Australia. To make a point, he brought up the military actions of the Vichy government in Northern Africa, and thanks to this book, I was able to hold my own in the conversation, and had a good working knowledge of the topics. Yay, reading!

Alister Black says

The fascinating story of Paris, a centre of world cultural and intellectual life, both under the Nazi occupation and afterwards. The authors give a vivid portrayal of the class divides in French politics and society. We read of the collaboration of some conservatives with Vichy, and in some cases their enthusiastic participation in Nazi atrocities. The post war world saw them lose their place to be replaced in many cases, if not all, by those who participated in resistance.

The Communist Party (PCF) was the largest and most popular party in the immediate post-war period, thanks to their role in the resistance and popular support for the part played by the Red Army in defeating fascism. But Stalin had little interest in a new French Revolution. Instead he was concerned with consolidating his gains, building a buffer zone in Eastern and Central Europe to protect the Soviet Union from further invasions. So the PCF acted in the interests of Soviet foreign policy, not French socialism.

On the other side was de Gaulle, hero of the Free French army in exile. Militarily he played a minor role but symbolically he was hugely important. His egotism and dictatorial tendencies are explored in this book.

More fascinating still are the stories of the intellectuals and cultural figures of Paris such as Sartre, De Beauvoir, Picasso, Greco, Merleau Ponty and Camus. It would have been nice to hear more about their ideas and much of what is written about them amounts to showbiz gossip.

Peter says

Dele af bogen var tung at komme igennem, men det skyldtes sandsynligvis mestendels min manglende interesse for kunstner-delen af den periode.

Kelly says

It's definitely a particular kind of history with its own perspective, but it's so my thing and I loved it and I will write about it soon.
